

March 9, 2009

The Hon. Thomas P. Gaffey, Co-chair
The Hon. Andrew M. Fleischmann, Co-Chair
Education Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
Room 3100, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Chairmen Gaffey and Fleischmann:

I am writing to express support for House Bill 5769, "An Act Concerning School Drop Out Rates."

Many social and economic factors dictate the need for youth in the United States to obtain as much education as possible in order to be viable workers in the future. Fast changing technological advances affect nearly every current job or emerging labor trend in our society. In addition to the changes resulting from technology in our nation's labor market, our youth face increased competition as workers in a global economy, one that already has significantly and negatively impacted job retention in our nation. As President Barack Obama said in a recent address, new jobs emerging for the future American workforce will require higher level training and skills from our developing workforce—that is, the students who are being educated in our public schools today. Every state in our nation, including Connecticut, needs to respond at this critical time by providing the best training and education for all of its students. However, students cannot learn if they are not in school. Without adequate education, they will not get jobs that will sustain their futures and allow them to become contributing members of our society. It is imperative that the state does all that it can to keep children in school.

Our state's ability to accomplish this imperative is undermined by a provision that allows students to exit school before they are fully trained and possess one of the most important keys to success in our society—obtaining an education. The impact of this provision allowing youth to exit public school at 16 years of age, usually before they have fully completed the prescribed academic curriculum, is a serious issue across the state, and especially in our large cities. For example, according to statistics from the CT. State Department of Education, in a four year period from 2004-2007, 15.3% of New Haven students had dropped out before their expected graduation year of 2007. The state should not be compliant with students who, attracted to short term appeal, take an early exit. Rather, the state must take a responsible position, one that recognizes the long term social and economic value, by implementing regulations to ensure that students obtain adequate education. To ignore this opportunity to reduce school drop out rates is to give assent. Rising drop out rates can be reversed, and students achievement can be given a

fair chance to increase if House Bill 5769 is passed. Therefore, I write in support of the passage of House Bill 5769.

Sincerely,

Lisa Monroe
Chair, Education Committee
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